

The Need for Inclusive Public Transportation— Barriers and Accommodations

People with disabilities must often depend upon public transportation. Many people in our community tend not to drive, may have lower incomes and therefore lower rates of personal vehicle ownership. Public transportation should be a useful, easily available, safe resource for everyone.

Everyone deserves to be able to readily navigate the environment with regard to safety, comfort, and affordability—to reach our destinations in the general public.

But many people with disabilities and seniors confront transportation barriers that interfere with ordinary needs for grocery shopping, appointments, or getting to work or school, or to socialize with friends and family. These barriers are frustrating and limit quality of life.

Here are some examples of barriers:

- Many people with disabilities may experience fatigue or are limited in standing or walking longer distances.
- Those with mobility devices such as canes, crutches or wheelchairs may encounter barriers in the build environment: stairs, curbs, lack of functioning elevators or broken elevators.
- Some find that the designated seating in transportation vehicles for mobility devices are filled, or cannot find a place to sit.
- Poor signage or alternate communication for Deaf people or those with hearing impairments impede entering or exiting vehicles or stations.
- Many people with disabilities and seniors are on a fixed-income, and need affordable transportation. Transportation costs can be too high for lower-income people, thus limiting travel and affecting some from meeting basic needs or improving their circumstances.
- Even though it is the law, visually-impaired people with guide dogs are sometimes refused in Ubers and Lyfts.



- People with disabilities are sometimes treated badly by other passengers, which can be annoying or even frightening, and limit needed accommodations for safe, comfortable travel.
- People who don't drive and cannot readily use busses or trains must be able to access paratransit and other types of more individualized services that enable door-to-door transportation. Paratransit is a system of transportation that has many benefits, and many problems still to overcome. Cabs, taxis, the growing systems of "transportation Network Companies"--TNCs, Uber and Lyft also have many pros and cons for people with disabilities.

Barriers may result in unemployment and/or persistence with low incomes, which further limits transportation options and economic security.

What People with Disabilities Need

What is needed is smooth, comfortable, safe, affordable and efficient transportation throughout our community in ways that facilitate social integration, health, safety, and economic stability.

We should be able to achieve these goals through all kinds of transportation services including modified vehicles, accessible travel information, training and awareness for transportation providers and others, and financial supports to enable equal access to mobility, and community integration.

Accommodating the transportation needs of people with disabilities requires "universal access." This means that if typical transportation systems or vehicles are not workable, there must be modifications, or reasonable alternatives, that enable their use by people with disabilities. This concept builds on 7 principles of Universal Design¹, which are:

1. Equitable Use
2. Flexibility in Use
3. Simple and Intuitive Use
4. Perceptible Information

¹ National Disability Authority. The 7 Principles. Retrieved August 20, 2019. <http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/The-7-Principles/>



5. Tolerance for Error
6. Low Physical Effort
7. Size and Space for Approach and Use

Universal Access requires concrete changes, technologies and specific services and resources to reach the standards of inclusive design for transportation.

